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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002476

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PAID PTER PREF JO I2 UN

SUBJECT: PROGRESS ON REMOTE MANAGEMENT OF IRAQ REFUGEE PROGRAMS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 01875

1B. BAGHDAD 02123

1C. BAGHDAD 01649

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Henry S. Ensher.

Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary. Officers in charge of UNAMI, IOM, and UNHCR's Iraq refugee and IDP programs told visiting PRM PDAS Rich Greene May 17-18 in Amman that the UN is attempting to shift its focus from security to humanitarian related activities in Iraq, but that remote-control program management is likely to remain a necessity in 2005, despite the UN's recent return to Erbil and Basra. Utilizing former UN employees to evaluate their local implementing partners, UNHCR and IOM believe that the MoDM has established its credibility in Iraq in the last six months. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) PDAS Greene met with UNAMI rep John Pace May 17. Responding to Greene's questions on effectiveness of the UN's 'remote management' of operations in Iraq, Pace said UN presence is already increasing in Erbil and Basra branch offices, and international non-logistics staff will begin short-term visits soon. Accommodations, transportation, and security continue to constrain major progress in UN activities in Iraq as a whole. (Note: Additional personnel will focus on constitution development, rather than humanitarian work. END NOTE.) Pace explained that the UN in Iraq is working extensively through implementing partners, both international and national NGOs, to provide humanitarian assistance. Amman-based capacity building workshops support MoDM in its efforts to coordinate and participate more effectively in these programs.

13. (C) Pace added that it's often a challenge to make a distinction between Iraq "humanitarian" and "reconstruction" activities. He noted that the UN is developing a web site to provide hard information on its humanitarian and other field projects; for security reasons this will not disclose specific information on the UN's local implementing partners. Greene noted that housing construction initiatives would require reliable domestic partners, information that UN agencies have developed through their work in Iraq.

14. (C) Greene pushed back on the UN's current staffing posture because of the security situation. He encouraged the UN to look hard at ways to meet its staffing requirements, while maintaining good security practices. He added that the UN should do more to make others aware of the fairly extensive work it is carrying out in country. Like it or not, the UN is "the canary in the coal mine" when it comes to signaling to other donors and NGOs the possibility of effectively carrying out humanitarian and related work in country.

15. (C) May 18 PDAS Greene took part in a joint ProCare/IOM/UNHCR briefing on MoDM capacity building. Attendees were: (USG) Rich Greene, PDAS PRM; Poloff, Notetaker; and (International Groups) Yacoub El Hillo, Chief of Mission UNHCR; James Lynch, Officer in Charge UNHCR Amman; Ghassan Shafiq Soufran, ProCare Managing Director; Ghada Shafiq Soufan, ProCare Managing Director; Rasha Abdel-Majeed, IOM Programme Officer Capacity Building; Michael Stanisich, IOM Programme Officer Capacity Building.

16. (C) During this briefing, Greene met with ProCare's Ghada and Ghassan Shafiq Soufran, consultants for IOM and UNHCR's capacity building program with MoDM. Representatives from ProCare focused on organizational improvements in MoDM in the last six months: developing the structure of the Ministry, drafting of basic laws, and human resource improvements. Ghada Soufran said ProCare is still finalizing job descriptions for Ministry jobs and evaluating current employees. She said Ministry employees did not until recently know their functions in detail, and this improvement is a direct result capacity building. Ghada added many of the 300

employees at the MoDM work in security. The PDAS asked if downsizing MoDM was discussed, and the group said laid off employees could seek retribution against the Ministry. Many stressed that the Ministry's enabling legislation is still awaiting approval.

¶17. (C) Yacoub El Hillo stressed MoDM's positive role in Iraq. He said the Ministry is now well known by both Iraqis and NGOs and is especially important to NGOs because of the security situation in Iraq. MoDM visits refugees detained in prisons and follows up with other Iraqi Ministries. Hillo said that internal and external recognition began with the November 2004 Fallujah campaign. According to Hillo, MoDM had 10 staff members on the ground assisting returning families by supplying them with basic items. NGOs now call on MoDM to respond to refugee crises because they can quickly react and are perceived as neutral, as opposed to being an outside invading force.

¶18. (C) IOM Representative for Iraq Tschannen, who is based in Amman, stressed that IOM is ready to assist more returns in northern Iraq but noted that most European nations have agreed to continue refugees' continuing residence in those nations because of insecurity in Iraq. The UK has 5,000 potential returnees, and IOM is waiting for the availability of charter flights to process the group. Tschannen added that the Dutch had indicated they had about 12,000 potential returnees. Sweden had also been in recent contact with IOM. The Germans were handling their own return program without IOM assistance.

¶19. (C) Concerning refugees in Iraq's neighboring countries, El Hillo noted that UNHCR had 30,000 registered in Jordan under its 1998 agreement (which requires UNHCR to secure third-country resettlement within 6 months). He added that about 3,000 new arrivals from Mosul had entered Syria this year. While el Hillo thought there was a real danger that setting criteria to determine which Iraqis would qualify for legal refugee status would cause more Iraqis to seek refuge in other countries than would otherwise be the case. El Hillo noted that UNHCR decreased its budget for next year by \$8 million because it was confident that most Iraqis can eventually return to Iraq.

¶10. (C) On remote management, UNHCR argued the establishment of new, integrated UN centers in Basra and Erbil was a step forward but affirmed that they were using independent contractors who were former UN employees to evaluate its partners in Iraq. UNHCR released a comprehensive review of all its programs in the north and had developed, in early May, its first evaluation report. He said UNHCR's website includes an interactive map documenting its Iraq programs. While discrimination, lack of documentation, language barriers for Iraqis who had grown up in neighboring Iran, and unemployment remained key factors, El Hillo said the biggest problem with resettlement in the north was the skyrocketing cost of housing. A house that used to cost \$6,000 now costs \$10,000. El Hillo noted that UNHCR is carefully monitoring its partners and the effectiveness and sustainability of housing projects.

¶11. (C) UNHCR's Jordan OIC stressed the need to press the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) to move forward with relocation of refugees currently in the Anbar desert camp of Al Tash to Sulaimaniya as soon as possible to stem the outflow of Al Tash residents towards Jordan; Lynch noted that additional arrivals could impact the GOJ agreement to consolidate the No Man's Land population in Ruwaishid (reftel). Although Jordan placed no explicit conditions on UNHCR, Lynch said that UNHCR had agreed to look "vigorously" for third-country solutions to ensure the remaining ex-Iraqi caseload. (Note: Iraq's PM has approved closing al Tash camp and transferring the refugees to Sulaimaniya.)

¶12. (C) COMMENT: PDAS Greene's visit encouraged UNHCR and IOM to take more direct action on the ground in Iraq. Post welcomes this effort to increase UN presence in Iraq and effective humanitarian action.  
END COMMENT

¶13. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK minimize considered.

Jeffrey